

AIR WAR COLLEGE  
AIR UNIVERSITY

**U.S.-SINO RELATIONS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**  
**A CRISIS OF CONSCIENCE**

by

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A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY  
IN FULFILLMENT OF THE CURRICULUM REQUIREMENT

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MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

April 1995

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TITLED: U.S.-Sino Relations In The Twentieth Century: A Crisis of Conscience

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U.S.-Sino relations in the twentieth century have been driven by a constant battle between the ideological and pragmatic components of the American psyche--a crisis of conscience. The motivation behind U.S. policy has swung from pure profit, to regional balance of power, to rampant paranoia and the red scare, and back towards regional stability, all within the span of 95 years. The multi-polar world we now occupy by no means eased this internal struggle nor altered the rationale set out 50 years ago for productive U.S.-Sino relations--the maintenance of a regional balance of power. The recent victory of democracy over communism in Eastern Europe served to stoke the fires of idealism thus making the U.S. ideological struggle more complex.

Today, for the first time in several decades, no major strategic fault lines split the major powers in the region. Now, perhaps more than ever, it is critical for the United States to be mindful of its true strategic interests in Asia and carefully choose the right tools to accomplish its international objectives. By analyzing three major U.S.-Sino policy interactions in the twentieth century--the loss of China in 1949, the Nixon rapprochement in 1972, and the 1989 Tiananmen Square trade backlash--this paper explores the premise that those U.S. foreign policy decisions affecting China which were based on an idealistic view of the world, rather than realism, were unsuccessful. Through an historical analysis of these events, this paper concludes that a realistic approach to China as we move towards the twenty-first century will ultimately prove the most successful in furthering U.S. strategic interests in Asia.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lieutenant Colonel Mark D. Still was commissioned through the Air Force Reserve Officer Training program at the University of Washington in 1977. After completion of Undergraduate Pilot Training he was assigned to McChord Air Force Base, Washington, as a C-141 pilot where he attained the qualification of flight examiner aircraft commander. A follow-on assignment took him to Altus Air Force Base, Oklahoma, where he served as an advanced flight training instructor and examiner pilot in the C-141. Staff tours have included Headquarters Military Airlift Command (MAC) and Headquarters U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM), both at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois. In these positions he served as briefing officer on the MAC Command Presentations Team, Executive to the MAC Vice Commander in Chief, and chief of government affairs, USTRANSCOM. Upon completion of his staff tour, he was assigned to Travis Air Force Base, California, where he served as operations officer and commander of C-141 strategic airlift squadron.

Lieutenant Colonel Still is a command pilot with over 4500 flight and simulator hours. His decorations include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Defense Commendation Medal, and Air Force Commendation Medal. He is a graduate of the Air War College, class of 1995.

# I

## REALISM VERSUS IDEALISM

“An idealist is one who, on noticing that a rose smells better than a cabbage, concludes that it is also more nourishing.”

-- H. L. Mencken

The events which led to the unceremonious expulsion of Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalist government from the mainland in 1949 and the “loss of China” to communism reflect the first major failure of U.S. foreign policy in the post World War II era. This perceived catastrophe hardened the resolve of the American people to quell the rising tide of communism wherever it might spread, helping to spawn the policy of containment, and serving as a catalyst for McCarthyism. To the American people, the struggle they were to undertake was no less than an ideological battle between two diametrically opposed systems of social morality, political philosophy, and ways of life.

How did we come to be so deeply entangled in this holy war between two opposing ideologies? Was the United States truly responding to its national interests in waging this war? Was the mere adoption of the moniker of communism sufficient cause to declare fully one-third of the world's population our enemy? (26) In China, our post-war foreign policy reflected the latter sentiment, founded on the conviction that, no matter the evidence to the contrary, no matter the lack of an underlying threat to American interests--a government espousing a communist ideology should and must be contained. U.S.-Sino relations in the twentieth century thus fell deeply into a paradigm heavily shrouded in the idealism of democracy as an ascendant force over the perceived

evils of communism, losing its focus on traditional national interests. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, this battle over ideology would quickly and often run headlong into the very real complexities of international politics--and the United States found itself faced with difficult choices when forced to deal with China. The result was policies driven by an ever-fluctuating battle between the ideological and pragmatic components of the American psyche. In this struggle, the ideological or moral component would deal with what we felt was right and wrong, while the pragmatic component concerned itself with what does and does not work. While both components are clearly necessary--for there is little to be gained by knowing what is right but not how to achieve it--the ensuing struggle all too often resulted in a crisis of conscience. (14:4-5) By analyzing three major U.S.-Sino policy interactions in the twentieth century--the loss of China in 1949, the Nixon rapprochement in 1972, and the 1989 Tiananmen Square trade backlash--this paper explores the premise that those U.S. foreign policy decisions affecting China which were based primarily on idealism--a view of the world as we hoped it would be, rather than realism--the world as it was, were unsuccessful. This crisis of conscience--U.S. policy based on idealism rather than realism--was destined to fail. As Hans Morgenthau wrote in 1952:

A foreign policy guided by moral abstractions, without consideration of the national interest, is bound to fail; for it accepts a standard of action alien to the nature of the action itself. That approach operates with a false concept of morality, developed by national societies but unsuited for the conditions of international societies. The appeal to moral principles in the international sphere has no concrete universal meaning. (21:33)

These lessons from history speak volumes about the United States' current and future foreign policy decisions relative to China. How should the world's last remaining superpower interact with the world's most rapidly modernizing, and largest remaining communist society? Can we afford the luxury of idealism as we enter the twenty-first century?



## II

### CHINESE CULTURAL IMPERATIVES

“We should not hurry, we should not be impatient, but we should confidently obey the eternal rhythm.”

-- Zorba the Greek

In the struggle to coalesce a moral and political consensus for U.S.-Sino relations, it is instructive to review the history of the Chinese people and their governance. Understanding the foundations of Chinese society provides the necessary lens through which to properly view the actions and reactions of the Chinese people.

#### **Ancient Sign Posts**

China is an ancient culture which has evolved into a highly structured, authoritarian, and patriarchal body politic. (16:2) The country's cultural perspective is comprised of an odd mixture of ancient beliefs in her ascendant position in the family of man, a strong component of violent militarism, and an egoistic isolationism. The results may best be described, somewhat sarcastically, as 3000 years of history unimpeded by progress. Ancient China viewed itself as the “Middle Kingdom.” Favored by their god, the empire was believed to exist on a plane somewhere between the humble earth and an exultant heaven. All other cultures were viewed as inferior, and therefore subject in one form or another to Chinese desires. Not averse to employing violence as a means to alter circumstances in and around China, her history is replete with bloody uprisings and militaristic adventurism. This egoistic view made it difficult for China to assimilate new ideas,

particularly Western thought, and greatly hampered her ability to modernize in the nineteenth century when confronted with technologically superior foreign powers.

While Western contact and knowledge of the Sinic world span some four centuries, the human record in China can be traced back nearly two million years. The oldest known civilization on earth, modern Chinese culture has its roots in the Shang Dynasty which ruled in North China from the 16th Century BC until c.1027 BC. (26) Over the next 3000 years, China would be ruled by nine major and numerous minor dynasties, each and every one, to varying degrees, autocratic and despotic.

Two dynasties in particular affected the cultural framework of twentieth century China. The Chou Dynasty (c.1027-771 BC) was the first to adopt as a central tenet the belief that the right to govern was not absolute, but dependent on the moral qualities of a dynasty and on heaven's continued favor. Thus, the ruler became known as the “son of heaven” who controlled the Middle Kingdom through a rigid set of complex rules of social etiquette called li. (26) Those cultures which practiced the li were considered civilized; those which did not were considered barbarians. This view of most non-Sinic people as barbarians continues even today.

The Han Dynasty (202 BC-AD 220) came to power following what had become an accepted norm for the transfer of power--peasant uprisings--and established a stable and highly centralized government. (26) The Han were the first to institute the tribute system of foreign affairs. Under this construct, China granted diplomatic recognition and trading privileges only to those states and peoples acknowledging its superiority, symbolized by a payment of tribute. This system would remain in place for more than 1500 years, until destroyed by Western firepower in the late nineteenth century.

## East Meets West

The last of the great Chinese dynasties ascended to power in the early seventeenth century. The Manchu Ch'ing Dynasty (1644-1911) represented an unbroken continuation of the despotic model of governance. (2:52) It was the Ch'ing Dynasty which grappled with the ever increasing demands of western barbarians for trade. As European sea-born commerce with Asia increased in the early seventeenth century, China's cultural experience left her ill-prepared to deal with these new barbarians from across the sea. These outsiders did not share China's perception of her ordained superiority, had no appreciation for the concept of li, and refused in great measure to recognize their subjugated status by paying tribute to the "son of heaven." The Ch'ing attempted to diplomatically and commercially engage the European powers under the traditional framework of the tribute system first begun in 200 BC, confining their trade activities to the single port of Canton in Southern China. (26) As trade rapidly expanded, opium became the principal currency for transactions between East and West. Rightfully concerned with the growing foreign-fed drug epidemic in their society, the Chinese confiscated and destroyed all opium stored in Canton, thereby precipitating the first opium war between Great Britain and China. (2:94) At its conclusion in 1842, the Ch'ing were forced by the Treaty of Nanking to capitulate to a British naval force, cede Hong Kong to Britain, open several ports to unrestricted trade, promise to conduct foreign relations on the basis of equality, and recognize the principle of extra-territoriality, thereby abdicating jurisdiction over foreigners on Chinese soil. (2:96) So began the subjugation of an ancient civilization according to the imperatives of a modernizing world. Over the next several decades, China would be forced to come face-to-face with the realities of her weakness in the international arena and would relinquish much of her regional power to the

barbarians. This painful awakening would also plant the emotional seeds which ultimately led to a powerful nationalism in China which would carry her into the twentieth century.

### **III**

#### **OPPORTUNITIES LOST:**

#### **CHINA AT THE CROSSROADS**

“He who chooses the beginning of a road chooses the place it leads to. It is the means that determine the end.”

-- Harry Emerson Fosdick

Coming late into the frenzy of the China trade, the United States felt it enjoyed a special relationship with the Middle Kingdom, securing a treaty of “peace, amity, and commerce” in 1844. (4:2) As the least aggressive, and arguably least imperialistic Western power involved in Asia, the United States had the opportunity to play a mediating role in the East-West power struggles which emerged in the late nineteenth century. The 1898 annexation of the Philippines after the Spanish-American War cemented America's interests and role in this important trade region. It was in this vein, having realistically determined that our economic and strategic interests were best served by an intact Chinese Empire, that the United States in 1899 sponsored the “Open Door Policy” toward China, seeking to maintain the balance of power in Asia through equal access and equal trade. (4:42) The maintenance of this balance of power became the central focus of U.S. foreign policy in Asia as we attempted to maneuver through the interests of Western Europe, Russia, and Japan.

#### **The Rise of Chinese Nationalism**

Although our policies toward China thus far were not motivated by idealism, the United States was presented with several opportunities to affect the political leanings of an emerging

China during the first half of the twentieth century. Each opportunity presented a complex international minefield through which the U.S. attempted to negotiate--unsuccessfully in the eyes of the Chinese. The first challenge to the U.S. desire for a status quo balance of power in Asia came in 1905 when Japan took over Manchuria from the Russians, beginning her quest for hegemony over the Pacific basin. Without sufficient Russian power to curtail Japanese expansionism, Chinese sovereignty over Northern China and Manchuria seemed unlikely. Similarly, with no significant threat to its power in the region, growing Japanese militarism could turn towards America's direct interest in the region, the Philippines. (4:55)

Three American presidents attempted to meet this challenge to U.S. foreign policy, all sympathetic to embryonic Chinese nationalist desires, but possessing widely disparate views on the role they should play. First was Teddy Roosevelt, who held some level of contempt for the Chinese, believing they would never break away from the glories of their past. This personal bias, coupled with decreasing U.S. economic interests in China and an acute awareness of the limits of U.S. power in the region, dampened Roosevelt's willingness to go head-to-head with Japan over Chinese sovereignty. Next was President Taft who sought to expand U.S. economic interests in China--to the benefit of both countries--and so launched a more aggressive East Asia policy. By this time, however, Japan was securely entrenched in Manchuria and protected by her European alliances. Consequently, the expansion of U.S. interests proved to be possible only in cooperation with Japan, ultimately leading to America becoming a partner with the imperialistic Japanese. (4:56) With the election of Woodrow Wilson, U.S. foreign policy toward China would become less motivated by economic factors and the maintenance of a balance of power, instead fashioned by his idealistic vision of the future world order and his dedication to the principle of self-determination. In a "Wilsonian" world the national interests of the U.S., and all other nations,

would be subsumed by a world community of interests. In this frame of reference, success is determined not by restoring a new, viable balance of power in Asia, but by destroying it all together. (21:26) President Wilson believed the American people had a moral obligation to assist the Chinese in their struggle for independence, and American cooperation with Japanese imperialism did not fit this view.

Given the rather lackluster performance of American foreign policy relative to China, many political activists within China had come to believe that “more had been promised than will ever be performed,” (4:79) and anxiously awaited the outcome of the 1919 peace conference at Versailles where President Wilson intended to battle for Chinese sovereignty on the international stage. Once again, however, the U.S. would be unable to follow through on her promises, yielding to Japanese demands in an effort to keep her at the peace table. This failure to secure Chinese sovereignty resulted in the first widespread civil demonstrations in China focused on the modernization of their society. The May Fourth Movement, as it was to be called, became the first catalyst which was to eventually bind China's factional society into a powerful nationalist force, ready to throw off the shackles of an ancient civilization in the quest for modernization and self-determination. (4:85)

Throughout 1920 and 1921, civil unrest continued throughout China. Sun Yat-sen and his Kuomintang (KMT) government in Canton resumed plans for the military reunification of China, while in July 1921, with assistance from Soviet agents, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was formally established. To the Western world, the balance of power in Asia appeared to be heading irrevocably toward a condominium that would be antagonistic toward U.S. interests. Growing Soviet involvement, increased Japanese imperialism, and a U.S./Japanese naval arms race threatened to erupt into direct conflict. Wishing to change the course of events in the region, the

U.S. convened the Washington Conference in late 1921. When China was invited to participate, the hope was to reverse the failure at Versailles. Once again, however, Chinese delegates would depart with far less than their expectations had envisioned. While participants in the conference agreed to not interfere further in the internal affairs of China, the resulting Nine Power Treaty, which contained no provisions for enforcement, merely ratified the status quo, calling for no new encroachments on Chinese sovereignty. Most of the rights which China had been forced to give up over the past 80 years remained lost. (4:89)

With yet another failure by the West, and particularly the U.S., to fulfill Chinese expectations, Sun Yat-sen turned to Russia for the assistance he needed to solidify the position of the KMT. In 1923, a reorganization of the KMT along Soviet Communist Party lines was implemented in return for a pledge from Russia to provide financial aid to the struggling Chinese government. While these actions signalled a new alliance between the KMT, CCP, and the USSR, Sun Yat-sen maintained his democratic leanings, contending that conditions in China were inappropriate for the development of communism. This alliance marked the beginning of a new tactic for the Soviets, as they attempted to strengthen anti-foreignism and convince the Chinese that all their problems were due to the imperialist countries meddling in China's affairs. And again, the U.S. refused to redress China's claims of treaty imbalances. (4:91-92)

In early 1925 Sun Yat-sen died and a struggle for control of the KMT began. Split down ideological lines, the KMT Right feared Soviet power and sought to expel the communists from the party and sever ties to the CCP. The KMT Left, headed by Chiang Kai-shek, succeeded in taking control of the party, squeezing out the anti-Soviet Right. Surprisingly, however, Chiang Kai-shek began a series of political and military actions which would, over the next two years, lead to his uncontested control of a KMT free of communist influence. At the completion of



Chiang's Northern Expedition, a military operation against Peking warlords, he dismissed both the Russian advisors and the Chinese leftists, thus beginning a long civil war between the two Chinese factions. On October 10, 1928 the Kuomintang captured Peking and won diplomatic recognition for its National Government of China at Nanking. True to the Soviet model under which the party had been organized, the KMT established a government that was, in effect, a one-party dictatorship under Chiang Kai-shek. (4:98-99)

A series of extermination campaigns by Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist government against the communists forced the CCP to abandon their sphere of influence in October 1934 and begin the infamous "Long March." During the march, Mao Tse-tung, for the first time, gained effective control over the CCP, thereby ending the era of Russian direction of party leadership. Remnants of the communist force reached Shensi Province in northwestern China in October 1935 after a march of 6,000 miles, and established a new headquarters at Yen-an from where they would rebuild and carry on their battle for control of China. (4:98)

While the civil war between the nationalists and the communists continued, the Japanese, in 1931, staged the Mukden Incident--a bombing of the Japanese-controlled South Manchurian Railroad--which Japan used as a pretext for overrunning Manchuria and establishing the puppet state of Manchukuo. Other encroachments followed, but it was not until July 1937 that full-scale war broke out. The Japanese threat forced the CCP and the KMT to form a united front. During this period the communists gained legitimacy as defenders of the Chinese homeland, and Mao rose in stature as a national leader. Within 18 months the Japanese conquered most of eastern China, forcing the nationalist government to retreat to Chungking. The United States and Britain, concerned about growing Japanese militarism, began to send aid to Chiang, thus beginning America's direct support of Chiang Kai-shek against his enemies.

## **The Rise of Chinese Communism**

As the outcome of World War II became clear, the United States once again was presented with an opportunity to deeply affect the internal politics of China. And for the first time, our anti-Communist bias would begin to play a prominent role in defining the balance of power in Asia--once again the centerpiece of our policies. In part as a result of increased doubt by most U.S. officials in China over the character and abilities of Chiang Kai-shek and his government, tension between the nationalists and the U.S. rose throughout 1944. The communist leadership was not unaware of this growing friction, and believed they were viewed favorably by a majority of American officials and journalists in China. (20:52) Having fought against a common enemy (the Japanese), CCP leadership envisaged a closer relationship between their party and the U.S., and so in January 1945, requested a meeting with President Roosevelt to discuss post-war China--a request the United States refused.

One month later President Roosevelt demonstrated America's continued low view of China in general and the Chinese communists in particular, by arranging a post-war settlement in East Asia without the participation or prior consent of any of the Chinese leaders. The Far Eastern Agreement, signed at Yalta in 1945, committed the Allies to a peaceful settlement of the Chinese civil war--a settlement in favor of the nationalists. Over the strong objection of staff experts on China, who felt U.S. aid to Chiang was making him increasingly recalcitrant and that a continuation of American policy would likely result in civil war in which the communists would be forced to seek Soviet help, President Roosevelt elected to sustain U.S. efforts to support and reform the nationalist government exclusively. (27:329) This decision made, Mao, desperate for financial support, had no choice but to turn to the Soviet Union. In August 1945, Mao signed a treaty with Russia guaranteeing their support of his movement in return for Soviet control over

Manchuria and Outer Mongolia. And so the stage was set for a Chinese civil war pitting the U.S.-backed nationalists of Chiang Kai-shek against the Soviet-backed communist forces of Mao Tse-tung, a struggle initially viewed by the U.S. as the forces of anti-imperialism and nationalism against Soviet imperialism. The Chinese view was somewhat different. True to their deep cultural roots, the civil war was seen as a peasant-based uprising against a government which had lost favor. The modern nomenclature of communism and nationalism had little ideological meaning to the majority of Chinese engaged in the conflict. (3:26) To the outside world, however, the ideology was everything.

From 1945 through 1949 the U.S. became Chiang's major ally and supporter in the war. That support, in the view of the Truman administration, bought some influence over the Chiang regime, which was urged to undertake political and economic reforms to curb rampant corruption and establish a more representative government. Washington actually slowed aid to the nationalists between 1945 and 1947 in an attempt to motivate change. Despite the lack of reform, the U.S. continued to send aid to Chiang and spurn overtures from the Chinese communists to improve relations. Being rebuffed, Mao published his famous "lean to one side" policy in July 1949, announcing that China must "either lean to the side of imperialism or to the side of socialism...neutrality is a hoax. No third path exists." (3:24)

With communist victory and the establishment of the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) on October 1, 1949, Mao proclaimed his government's association with all other communist regimes and their worldwide revolutionary mission. The reaction in America to the loss of China to communism was immediate and far reaching. Virtually overnight, decades of benevolence and sentimentalism toward China were transformed into fear and hatred, linked inexorably to our growing fear of China's new mentor, the Soviet Union. (2:371) Paranoia and bravado backed up

by the most potent arsenal of weapons in history came to define U.S.-Sino policy. Here was our ward and ally now turned against us. The U.S. felt betrayed, and so the hunt began for those who had abandoned U.S. interests, led by a junior senator from Wisconsin, Joe McCarthy. And so the question remains; how did a U.S. policy of anti-imperialism and an “open door” mutate into one of anti-communism? Did we lose sight of our national interests in the rush to prove ourselves ideologically superior to the Soviets?

## IV

### IDEALISM, COMMUNISM, AND U.S. NATIONAL INTERESTS

“I had grown tired of standing in the lean and lonely front line facing the greatest enemy that ever confronted man--public opinion.”

-- Clarence Darrow

Americans, until very recently, have tended to view communism as a monolithic force with its political center in the Kremlin. (2:378) This paradigm often blinded us to the possibility that communism may be nothing more than a collection of localized nationalist and socialist movements each with its own cultural roots and political agenda. If one goes back to the goals of U.S. foreign policy in China and examines its parts outside the ideology of national governments, it is possible to distill the true interests of the United States. Those interests were succinctly articulated in a Department of State Bulletin dated December 16, 1945 which read:

It is the firm belief of this Government that a strong, united and democratic China is of the utmost importance to the success of world peace. A China disorganized and divided either by foreign aggression,...or by violent internal strife, is an undermining influence to world stability and peace, now and in the future. (3:22)

While the concept of “democratic” is included in this statement, the preponderance of its language relates to the need for a strong and united China, free of foreign aggression and internal strife. These goals dovetail with the decades-old U.S. desire to quell imperialism and support self-determination in China. But to what end? Is this just another example of U.S. idealism, trying to “do the right thing,” or were there more specific motivations behind our desire for a strong and united China?

## **Communism and the Asian Balance of Power**

Undoubtedly economic interest played a role in U.S. policy. China is a vast country with unexplored potential for economic expansion, but market interest was not the primary motivator in the immediate post-war period; balance of power was. A strong, modern China able to defend her own borders would provide the best assurance of a stable Asia. A weak China, torn apart by internal conflict, resulted in no less than two major power shifts in less than forty years, first towards the Russians and then the Japanese. American foreign policy lost its focus on the Asian balance of power when we became blinded by our fear of communism and forgot the sound geopolitical, economic, and ethical basis for our support of China.

Given U.S. interests in China, it is instructive to compare them to those of Mao Tse-tung and his government. He had come to power on a platform whose central plank was anti-imperialism, the freeing of China from direct or indirect foreign influence. Mao's adoption of a communist ideology was seen by him as the best way to achieve his domestic political agenda, but did not inexorably tie him to the desires of Moscow, whom he regularly disobeyed even during the civil war they backed. Undo or unwelcome interference by the Soviet Union, should it attempt to expand its sphere of influence in Asia, would therefore arouse the desire for independence China had fought so hard to win. If the Chinese communists were genuinely dedicated to the preservation of China's national interests, they would resist Russian intervention. Conversely, if Mao's regime came to be viewed as a puppet of the Kremlin, serving the interests of a foreign power and not China's, he would lose popular support and be ousted. These fundamental goals are not antithetical to those of the U.S., and indeed are supportive of our primary objective--the maintenance of a balance of power. So what is the source of conflict between the PRC and U.S.?

Most Americans came to believe they were opposing the PRC not because it was Chinese, but because it was a puppet of the greater menace in Moscow and was aggressively threatening the West. China, as a progeny of international communism, was presented to be an immediate threat to the security of the United States--militarily, and economically. But closer examination of the facts behind the propaganda calls into question the extent to which this threat existed. Strategically, both the PRC and the USSR combined could not match U.S. power. America had come out of World War II as the undisputed military leader. Economically, the U.S. was healthy and prosperous. While both China and the USSR had suffered extensive economic damage during the war, America's industrial capability was intact and booming. By 1953, Soviet industrial output was only 30 percent that of the U.S. while the PRC's was less than 10 percent. Additionally, America produced 30 percent of the world's exports and owned or controlled 50 percent of the world's then known oil reserves. (3:34)

If the goals of the PRC were consistent with U.S. desires to maintain the balance of power in Asia and, despite the rhetoric, posed no real military or economic threat to the U.S., what was the basis for conflict? A 1950 poll indicated that fully 78 percent of the American people felt we were fighting against the Chinese to defend the ideal of supporting free peoples of the world against dictatorship. (3:39) Did the Chinese, with a 3000 year tradition of autocratic governance, view their government as ideologically inferior? Is the furtherance of an ideal the appropriate domain of foreign policy?

The realist view, as developed by Hans Morgenthau, would contend that the sole purpose of foreign policy must be the security of the nation. (21:88) To construct foreign policy primarily in terms of a crusade to bring the egocentrically perceived benefits of our form of government to others risks fueling nationalism and invites the promotion of the very ideology we sought to

suppress. Arguably, the goal of U.S. foreign policy in China should not have been to oppose the PRC as the result of Soviet imperialism, but support its national and social objectives, and by that support prevent it from becoming a victim of that very same imperialism. Even after the communist victory and our cessation of direct support to Chiang Kai-shek, we continued to align ourselves with the nationalists. This ideologically driven policy destroyed any remnants of the prestige or sympathy that the U.S. had traditionally enjoyed in China. Thus, we drifted into opposing the PRC regardless of the benefits or disadvantages to U.S. interests, but merely because they were communists. (20:119)

### **The Failure Of An Ideal**

With the clarity of hindsight it becomes obvious that after World War II the U.S. faced two real choices in China: provide whatever military and economic support was necessary to drive out the communists and assuage the discontent of the Chinese people, or resign itself to a communist victory and position itself to take advantage of every opportunity to further U.S. interests. Our policy failed when it was allowed to evolve from one founded on traditional national interests--economic and military balance of power--to one founded on the ideological superiority of democracy over communism. Our inability to differentiate between Russian imperialism as an extension of Soviet national power, and communism as an ideological basis for social change, led to the disaster that became U.S. policy toward China. The balance of power in Asia that the U.S. tried to maintain was, at least temporarily, destroyed in 1950 with the outbreak of war in Korea. The communist revolution we tried to suppress was successful. And as a result of these failures, the American people were subjected to a witch hunt of epic proportions as the "Red Scare" led to the internal persecutions known as McCarthyism.



As history has shown, China under Mao was not a puppet of the Kremlin. While the excesses under Mao's rule are abhorrent to Western ideology, the PRC never posed a serious threat to U.S. interests in the region. Conversely, the successes of Nationalist China on Taiwan are a marvel of post-war economic prosperity, despite the evidence of corruption and elitism heaped against Chiang Kai-shek. It may be, contrary to popular belief at the time, that the game the U.S. played in Asia was not, after all, a zero-sum game. It would take several decades and another war for America to return to a foreign policy in Asia that was founded on realism rather than idealism.

## V

### **THE FANTASTIC JOURNEY: RED SCARE TO RAPPROCHEMENT**

“He must have a long spoon that must eat with the devil.”

-- William Shakespeare

To argue in early 1966 that in just six years the president of the United States would travel to Beijing to meet with Chairman Mao to begin normalization of relations between the two countries could have only been met with skepticism if not outright hostility. Memories of bitter battles against the Chinese during the Korean War were still vividly etched in the American psyche, and the United States was just becoming embroiled in another war against the spread of communism in Vietnam, a war we were convinced was being supported by both China and the USSR. American policy towards the People's Republic of China had been forged in the heat of battle on the Korean peninsula in 1950. That policy held that the Chinese communist regime was illegitimate, that Beijing was both aggressive and expansionistic, a puppet of world communism subordinate to the wishes of Moscow and should be militarily contained, politically isolated, and subjected to pressures designed to limit its power and speed its ultimate collapse. (3:51)

Indeed, the specter of monolithic world communism was still very real to the American people and their government. For this reason alone rapprochement with the PRC, which began in 1972, is a landmark in U.S.-Sino relations. But this watershed event is made all the more remarkable given the situation in China which would immediately precede it--Mao's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, an internally motivated uprising designed to ensure that China

remained squarely on the Marxist-Leninist path. The coexistence of these two seemingly diametrically opposed events--Cultural Revolution and rapprochement--makes this a truly fascinating period in world history, and the beginning of a new chapter in the struggle between communism and the free world. (2:407)

### **U.S.-Sino Relations: 1949-1966**

From the late 19th century through World War II the United States looked upon China as its special ward, striving to protect it from the imperialistic designs of European and Asian powers. With the expulsion of Chiang Kai-shek and his nationalist government from the mainland of China in 1949 and the ascendancy of Mao Tse-tung's communist regime, the tenor and tone of U.S.-Sino relations rapidly degenerated into mistrust and antagonism. The seemingly unstoppable spread of communism across Central Europe, combined with the "loss of China," drove the United States to adopt its policy of containment, thereby devoting all its political, economic, and military capital to staunch the "Red Tide." (22:315)

Barely a year after Mao declared the existence of the People's Republic of China, U.S. and Chinese troops faced one another in battle on the Korean peninsula. The direct involvement of the PRC in the Korean War was interpreted by the U.S. as further proof of Beijing's expansionist views and direct links to the Kremlin. And so the PRC was inexorably linked in American policy to monolithic world communism headed by the Soviet Union. (22:6)

Our response to this red tide was contained in National Security Council Document #68 (NSC-68) which defined the U.S. policy of containment as; "a permanent and fundamental alteration in the shape of international relations," further stating "The issues that face us are momentous, involving the fulfillment or destruction not only of this Republic but of civilization itself." (22:82) And so American foreign policy direction made the transition from the flexible

political and economic containment goals of the Marshall Plan to a harsh and unremitting struggle of nuclear-armed and ideologically driven opponents. Secretary of State Dean Acheson summarized U.S. foreign policy by saying: “Our analysis of the threat combined the ideology of communist doctrine and the power of the Russian state into an aggressive expansionist drive, which found its chief opponent and, therefore, target in the antithetic ideas and power of our own country.” (22:83) This ideologically driven policy destroyed any remnants of prestige or sympathy the U.S. had traditionally enjoyed in China. Thus we drifted into opposing the PRC regardless of the benefits or disadvantages to American interests, largely because they were communists supported by the Soviet Union.

### **The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution: 1966-1969**

There are differing views as to what motivated Mao Tse-tung to initiate the internal chaos which he proclaimed as “The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.” Most historians agree, however, that Mao believed China was beginning to lose sight of the pure Marxist-Leninist ideology upon which he had founded the PRC. He observed a trend growing within the Party bureaucracy towards policies which “would push China off the road to socialism and lead it back to a capitalist road.” (18:79) In Mao's view, the revolution could only be saved by educating the masses on their role in a socialist state, so they could closely monitor party leaders and throw out those who held “revisionist” notions, and thereby ensure the communist impetus of the revolution was maintained. The overthrow of all “capitalist-minded” bureaucrats within the Party became the first pillar of the Cultural Revolution.

At the heart of Mao's vision was his belief the Chinese people were particularly suited to successfully carry out a cultural revolution. He articulated this view by stating:

Apart from their other characteristics, China's 600 million people have two remarkable peculiarities; they are, first of all, poor, and secondly blank. That may seem like a bad thing, but it is really a good thing. Poor people want change, want to do things, want revolution. A clean sheet of paper has no blotches, and so the newest and most beautiful pictures can be painted on it. (19:316)

And yet, the revolution he was about to launch offered little in terms of describing the picture to be painted upon the clean sheet of paper Mao had proclaimed China to be. Rather, he stressed “the thought, culture, and customs which had brought China to where we found her [in 1949] must disappear, and the thought, customs, and culture of proletarian China, which do not yet exist, must appear.” (19:317) This destruction of “the four olds”--ideas, culture, customs, and habits--became the second pillar of the Cultural Revolution. And so upon these two pillars, the overthrow of bureaucratic elites and destruction of the four olds, Mao led his country towards a return to the pure communist revolutionary practices which had given it birth. (19:336)

Firmly believing the course of history was determined by what people thought and their willingness to foment revolution, Mao built, as the central focus of the Cultural Revolution, the doctrine of “Mao Tse-tung Thought” and “Correct Consciousness” which he promulgated through his infamous *Little Red Book*. (18:81) The first group to be indoctrinated by Mao's *Little Red Book* were university and middle school students. Resurrecting an image from earlier communist movements, radical student leaders formed units of the Red Guard, which were organized to carry out Mao's vision of the Cultural Revolution. Passionate Chinese youth would flock to Beijing to receive Mao's personal blessing as they embarked on their crusade to purify society. On 18 August, 1966, a million young people flocked to the square beneath the Gate of Heavenly Peace, a symbolic site of revolution since the May Fourth incident of 1919. In a theatrical ceremony, Mao stood atop the gate at sunrise and donned a red arm band, symbolizing

his becoming the “supreme commander” of the Red Guards, as well as their “great teacher,” “great leader,” and “great helmsman.” (19:336)

Motivated by widely divergent views and aims, this mobilization of China's educated youth quickly degenerated into a movement that was not only massive, but extraordinarily complex and factionalized in its goals. As is often the case with ideology, individual interpretations of the true meaning of Mao's doctrine--individual determinations as to who was pure and who was not--began to tear apart the Cultural Revolution. Just as the zealotry of McCarthyism tore at the fabric of American society in the 1950s, so too did the Cultural Revolution began to destroy China from within. On January 23, 1967, realizing the masses were unable to maintain unity and self-discipline, Mao ordered the People's Liberation Army to enter the political struggles to support revolutionary conservatives and restore order. (19:350) And so, two internal Chinese organizations, the highly hierarchical and bureaucratic army and the ideologically motivated Red Guards, began to battle each other for control of China's destiny.

By late August of 1967 China seemed to be on the brink of total anarchy and civil war. Mao had lost control of the masses he had mobilized to reform the bureaucracy and was in jeopardy of losing all of China to the chaos of the Cultural Revolution. On September 5, 1967, the army was instructed to restore order, and the message was transmitted to all China that the right of the masses to rebel had been rescinded. Through graphic demonstrations of state power, including public executions of alleged instigators of violence, the army was able to slowly squelch the flames of revolution which that same state had so purposefully fanned just one year earlier. (19:357)

The final confrontations between the bureaucracy and the proletariat took place where it all began, on the university campuses of Beijing. In July of 1968, the People's Liberation Army-

directed “Worker's Mao Tse-tung Thought Propaganda Teams” were sent to the campuses to stop the fighting and discipline the students. Wherever Red Guard units refused to disband, the army quickly moved in to crush them. By April of 1969 political rhetoric had recast the Cultural Revolution as a means to consolidate the power of the Party. What began as a means of reforming Chinese society and the bureaucracy of its government, ended with the Party firmly in control, in its original form, with political power balanced between the party, army, and bureaucracy, just as it always had been--only Chairman Mao's rivals were missing from the stage. (19:365)

### **Rapprochement !**

While China was suffering through the Cultural Revolution, America was moving ever deeper into the quagmire of the Vietnam war. It is difficult to imagine that the U.S. could begin the process of normalization with a communist government which had, through revolution, just reaffirmed its commitment to a Marxist-Leninist ideology while chest deep in a war to stifle that very same ideology. Yet that is just what newly elected President Richard Nixon did in 1969. (20:109)

What made this remarkable switch in foreign policy possible was the addition of a new ingredient in the Sino-American relationship--the degenerating state of affairs between China and the USSR. Beginning as early as 1956 with Khrushchev's denunciation of Joseph Stalin, one of communism's greatest leaders in the eyes of Mao Tse-tung, the always fragile link between Moscow and Beijing began to dissolve. In 1959 Khrushchev unilaterally abrogated the 1957 Soviet-Chinese agreement on military technology (which was to have led to China's ascent to the ranks of the nuclear powers) and in 1960 he suspended all technical aid to China. (20:106) Increasingly vitriolic exchanges between Beijing and Moscow flared in March 1969 into a series

of armed conflicts along the Manchurian-Siberian border. President Nixon's response to a 1969 Soviet inquiry into the possible reaction of the United States should Russia launch an attack on Chinese nuclear facilities was unequivocal--the U.S. would not stand by if China were to be seriously weakened or defeated by a Sino-Soviet war. (17:189) Amazingly, the heretofore idealistically polar foreign policies of the United States and China had suddenly found common ground. As Henry Kissinger has said, "We did not consider our opening to China as inherently anti-Soviet. Our objective was to purge our foreign policy of all sentimentality." (17:191)

While President Nixon remained committed to the concept of containment, he recognized that Russia was the real threat to U.S. national interests. Therefore, it became advantageous to the United States to attempt to curb the Soviet threat by drawing the Soviet's other rival, China, into a diplomatic tripolar relationship. (22:313) On April 21, 1971, the Chinese sent a secret invitation to the U.S. requesting a personal envoy of the president be sent to Beijing to begin the process of re-establishing formal contact between the two governments. Recognizing the potential opportunity to speed U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam while dramatically affecting the balance of power in Asia, steps toward rapprochement were begun. (17:194)

In February of 1972, President Nixon traveled to Beijing and met with Chairman Mao. The result of this historic visit was known as the Shanghai Communiqué, which outlined the desire of the two nations to normalize relations. Rapprochement was now a reality. As Henry Kissinger stated; "The hostilities between China and the Soviet Union served our purposes best if we maintained closer relations with each side than they did with each other. The rest could be left to the dynamic of events." (22:712)



## **The Return of Realism**

The road to improved Sino-American relations was indeed rocky. Both countries were saddled with tremendous ideological baggage which constantly threatened to topple the balance of power between East and West. China attempted to deal with her internal problems through a rededication to those very ideals, and was almost torn apart by the Cultural Revolution unleashed by Mao Tse-tung. In America, the muting of strident ideological themes took place despite China's rededication to communism and our deep involvement in a war promulgated to contain that very ideology. Indeed, rapprochement became the first step toward a fresh perspective for international relations, where national interests dominated ideology. And the world moved one small step back from the precipice of superpower confrontation.

## **VI**

### **MOST FAVORED NATION STATUS AND HUMAN RIGHTS:**

#### **IDEALISM REVISITED**

“Being able to distinguish between lesser and greater evils is a sign of moral sophistication, for whoever ignores the existence of varying degrees of evil is bound eventually to become a servant of evil.”

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

When the government of the Peoples Republic of China used military force to quell pro-democracy demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in June 1989, a firestorm of revulsion and indignation was unleashed in the United States. The vivid images broadcast by the American media, portraying hundreds of thousands of unarmed Chinese youth facing down tank-mounted infantry as they demonstrated for greater political freedom, was the catalyst for broad demands that the United States do something to right what was perceived to be a terrible wrong. Congress reacted by constructing a set of broad economic sanctions designed to punish the PRC and send an unequivocal signal of U.S. resolve to champion human rights and political reform. And so began what was to become an annual battle between Congress and the Executive Branch over the question of how best to influence positive change within China.

The negative response by President Bush to Congress' attempts to link renewal of Most Favored Nation (MFN) trading status for the PRC to “overall significant progress” in three broad categories--human rights, nuclear proliferation, and trade--once again brought into sharp relief the

fundamental battle between the pragmatic and ideological components of the American psyche. (6:3517) As always, the contention arose over which component should predominate.

### **A Realistic View of Tiananmen Square**

After nearly forty years of self imposed isolation, China began to emerge from her shell in the 1980s. Intense media coverage of student-led protests during the spring of 1989 quickly thrust her to center stage. Objective analysis of the tragic events in Tiananmen Square is difficult, given that each observer brings cultural, ethical, moral and political baggage to the process. One may argue that from a Chinese perspective, given their cultural history, the actions of the government were fully justified. The ruling body in China began, as so many before it, as a peasant uprising, overthrowing an unrepresentative government through the use of force. While the current government in Beijing is autocratic from a Western view, that tradition in China has unbroken roots which go back nearly 3000 years. When the peace and stability of a government is threatened by what, in a country of over 1.2 billion people can only be described as a minority, some reaction is inevitable. Some, too, have asked why the demands of the United States were not given more credence by Beijing. As the previous review of U.S. policy toward China has shown, particularly focusing on where we have placed her interests vis-à-vis her enemy's, Beijing's reaction is less a mystery.

So why the great hue and cry in the U.S. over the legitimate use of power by a sitting government to control civil disobedience and violence? The reaction may best be described as a reflexive response to what had become an increasingly idealistic view of the world. In 1989 the Soviet Union was on its knees. The cold war appeared to be ending as the first cracks began to appear in the communist fortress, when in May of 1989, the government of Hungary began to dismantle the barbed wire "iron curtain" that marked her border with Austria. Hopes for a world

free of communism ran high--until Tiananmen Square. In June 1989 this growing idealism ran smack into the realities of political power in China, and Americans were upset that their dream had been shattered. The question of the day quickly became what we should do about this affront to our view of the world. It was up to the President to determine what price we should be willing to pay in order to affect change in China--what was our role, and what did we have to lose?

### **Contemporary U.S. Strategic Interests**

The principal focus of U.S. strategic policy in Asia has remained remarkably constant over the past 150 years--maintaining the balance of power in the region. Precluding the emergence of a regional hegemon ensures a U.S. role in the area and access to the vast markets there. Today, the need for a strong and united China, free of foreign aggression and internal strife is just as important as it was in 1899 when we promulgated the Open Door policy. But to what end? Undoubtedly economic interests have always played a role in U.S.-Sino policy, and are playing an increasing role today. China is a vast country with unexplored potential for economic expansion, but market interests were and are not the primary motivation. A strong, modern China able to defend her own borders provides the best assurance of stability in the entire region. (5:xvii)

### **Regional Stability**

China has the potential to play a destabilizing role among the rapidly modernizing ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asia Nations) states and other Sinic dominated countries such as Taiwan and Hong Kong as they struggle for resources, markets, and multilateral agreements to fuel and protect their meteoric economic expansion. China's economic integration into evolving regional trading patterns could provide a catalyst for continued growth in the area, and potentially soften what many China scholars consider the inevitable collapse of Chinese communism.

Equally important for the U.S. is the emerging block of Sinic-oriented economic power in the region. With Hong Kong's 1997 reversion to Chinese control, rapidly expanding business ties between Taiwan and mainland China (an estimated \$7 billion in 1992), and the political influence of Chinese minorities who control large portions of the economies in several ASEAN nations, the emerging economic power bloc will quickly transcend regional issues. This potentially dominant factor in the international economy is a factor with which the U.S. must increasingly deal.

While a strong, economically integrated PRC helps protect the balance of power from forces external to China, her growing economic strength has a dark side. Recent military modernization and power projection by the PRC into the South China Sea, particularly in the Spratley Islands, forebodes a potentially destabilizing expansionism by China as she looks to increase access to natural resources vital to her rapidly growing economy. The PRC has recently purchased 72 Su-27 fighters, 300 MiG-31 interceptors, and possibly an aircraft carrier from the former Soviet Union. (1:20) Additional modernization has occurred in long-range surface and submarine assets, amphibious forces, and aerial refueling capability. (1:20) While all this equipment could be justified for operations within the vast expanse of China and her nearly 9000 miles of coastline, the added power projection capability is potentially destabilizing to the region. Adding to the concerns of other regional powers is the increasing occurrence of Chinese interception of shipping in the South China Sea. In 1993 alone, 64 separate incidents were reported where merchant ships were stalked, fired upon, boarded, and/or detained by Chinese military vessels. (12:23) These efforts to exercise de-facto control over international waters near her shores, combined with her military force modernization, may portend an undesirable trend in the future ability of China to disrupt regional stability. Such activity has the potential to upset the fragile balance between the rapidly modernizing states in Southeast Asia.

## **Proliferation**

A further outgrowth of China's growing military and economic strength is her increased sale of military hardware on the international market. Of particular concern to the United States are the PRC's violations of the Missile Technology Control Regime, an agreement designed to curb the proliferation of nuclear-capable missile technology. This spread of potentially destabilizing technology to regions of the world where the United States has significant interests, like the Middle East, puts China directly at odds with our goal to control the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Of equal concern is China's suspected role in supplying non-nuclear nations such as Pakistan with weapons-capable nuclear technology in direct violation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty which she signed in 1973 and ratified in 1974. (15:174)

## **International Cooperation**

In an increasingly complex, multi-polar world, the United States finds it necessary and productive to work through international coalitions such as NATO and the United Nations to further our interests. As a member of the U.N. Security Council with full veto power, China has the potential to greatly complicate U.S. foreign policy. A currently sensitive issue is China's role in efforts to open North Korea's nuclear program to international inspection. China's abstentions on censure resolutions and its limited use of diplomatic pressure on its ally raises questions about its reliability, from a U.S. perspective, on complex international issues. An active, fully engaged relationship with China is necessary to secure her cooperation as we attempt to achieve common interests and resolve differences. (5:xvii)

## **Economic Interdependence**

Finally, but not unimportantly, there is the growing economic interdependence between the United States and Asia. The direct impact of a destabilized Asia on the U.S. economy would

be dramatic. Over the past decade, the Asia-Pacific region has become our largest trading area, both as a supplier of U.S. imports and as a market for our exports, comprising more than 40 percent of our total trade. In 1992, two-way trade with Asia was over \$340 billion, 51 percent greater than our transatlantic trade. (25:554) U.S. direct investment in Asian economies was more than \$145 billion in 1992, about 30 percent of our total direct foreign investment. (25:555) China has the fastest growing economy in the region, expanding at 13 percent in 1993, as compared to 3.3 percent for Japan and 2.5 percent for the U.S. (23:152) The U.S. exported nearly \$8 billion in goods to the PRC in 1992, while importing nearly \$31 billion. Experts have estimated that currently 150,000 U.S. jobs are directly dependent on our exports to China. (9:390)

The stakes in the game of MFN status for China are obviously high. Actions taken by the U.S. which jeopardize our relationship with China or reduce the amount of influence or leverage we have with Beijing could have far reaching impacts on our economy and our ability to further our international agenda exclusive of China. Decisions must be carefully weighed to ensure possible results are worth potential costs. Can we afford a U.S.-Sino policy anchored in idealism?

### **Mechanics of Most Favored Nation Status**

American foreign policy first lost its focus on the Asian balance of power in 1949 when we became blinded by our fear of communism and forgot the sound geopolitical, economic, and ethical basis for our support of China. The MFN debate forbade a similar loss of perspective. Congressman Lee Hamilton (D-IN) may have crafted the telling question when he asked his colleagues on the floor of the House of Representatives, “Do we promote our security, economic and human rights interests in China through engagement or through confrontation?” (8:2317)

The MFN debate is not new to the political landscape. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee first recommended development of trade relations with China in 1966. It was not until 1971 however, on the eve of historic moves toward rapprochement, that President Nixon ended the United States' 20 year trade embargo against the PRC. (24:18) Then in 1980, responding to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Congress passed the U.S.-PRC Trade Agreement, opening the way for MFN status for China. (24:14)

Under terms of the Trade Act of 1974, MFN could only be granted to the PRC through a Sino-American bilateral commercial agreement. The agreement had to contain safeguards against market disruption, include procedures for settling commercial disputes, make provisions for bilateral consultations, and secure protection for the individual property rights of U.S. nationals. The Sino-American Commercial Accord signed in 1979 met these requirements. (24:134) In addition, since the Jackson-Vanick Act (originally designed to punish Soviet practices) prohibited the granting of MFN status to any non-market economy nation that denies its citizens the right or opportunity to emigrate or imposes more than nominal exit fees or taxes on documents or individuals, a Presidential waiver to the provisions of that legislation was required. All these requirements came together in the Sino-American Trade Treaty which was ratified by the Congress on January 24, 1980, thereby granting MFN tariff treatment to the PRC for the first time. (24:134)

### **The MFN Debate**

The debate over MFN status for China did not coalesce immediately after the events in Tiananmen Square. In fact, the 1990 MFN approval process was completed unencumbered. In 1991, however, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, when hopes for world-wide democracy were running particularly high, both chambers of the Congress passed legislation restricting China's



MFN status. The prohibitions were not only related directly to the incidents surrounding Tiananmen Square, but also included three other broad areas: human rights, weapons proliferation, and trade (see Appendix A). (7:3671) This action represented a victory, albeit temporary, of idealism over realism. President Bush, convinced that MFN was an inappropriate vehicle by which to advance reform in China, vetoed the bill--a veto supporters of the bill were unable to overturn. This scenario would play itself out, virtually unaltered, each year until 1994.

In a somewhat surprising move, President Clinton announced in May of 1994 that he would sign an executive order granting MFN status to China and in a major policy shift, discontinue linking trade and human rights issues to future decisions regarding MFN and China. (9:389) In announcing his decision, the president said he decided not to revoke China's MFN because renewal would maintain a lever for the U.S. government and, "...offer us the best opportunity to lay the basis for long-term sustainable progress on human rights and for the advancement of our other interests with China." (9:389) As in the previous three years, realism and the broader notions of national interests won out over a narrowly focused idealism.

### **Impacts of MFN Withdrawal**

The Chinese government hereby expresses its strong opposition to the U.S. move and lodges a protest with the U.S. government. If the U.S. side should insist on its way, it can only seriously impair Sino-U.S. cooperation, which eventually will hurt the vital interests of the United States. (9:414)

This official response from China's foreign ministry to our efforts to affect the internal politics and practices of the Chinese government comes as no surprise--we would have responded similarly had the tables been turned. While attempting to downplay the potential impact of increased tariff costs for goods shipped to the United States, however, Beijing had real cause for concern. Withdrawing or conditioning MFN would harm the most dynamic sectors of China's

fledgling economy, slowing progress toward a true market system and hampering political liberalization. (5:16) In 1992 China exported nearly \$31 billion in goods to the U.S. MFN status allows tariffs on those goods to average about 8 percent, versus 40 percent for non-MFN tariffs. (9:414) Exports to this country represent approximately 16 percent of all Chinese international trade. A reduction in those imports as a result of higher prices would have a detrimental impact on China's fragile experiment in market economics. (9:389) Today, job and income security in China is tenuous at best, while savings and pensions have diminished as the Chinese people become infected with consumerism and Chinese companies struggle to remain competitive. (11:17) Any increased pressure on an already overheated economy could represent the death knell for a very fragile socio-economic equation. Also prominent on the minds of China's senior leaders must be what they view as the avoidable mistakes of their communist brethren in the Soviet Union who let their economic programs get away from them at the cost of a collapsed regime. Avoiding a similar fate will largely drive the actions and reactions of China's governing elite. (10:13)

The United States would also be negatively affected by denial of MFN status for China. The \$31 billion in goods currently imported from China would cost each of us more to purchase, whether as a result of the increased tariffs or as a result of suppliers seeking other, more costly sources. A trade war with China would also have a negative impact on the estimated 150,000 U.S. jobs directly tied to that export market, including agricultural products. (9:390) Most importantly, on a macro scale, however, would be our loss of influence in the largest remaining communist regime in the world, paradoxically with the fastest growing economy in the world. As one think-tank researcher has said:

And so much the better, from the standpoint of the party bosses, if in suppressing domestic malcontents you can, at the same time, stir up your foreign enemy to attack China's prosperity with a blunt instrument like withdrawal of MFN. That way you can blame the foreigners and the dissidents for any economic downturn, wrap yourself in the flag of nationalism and try to out-Chinese your factional rivals. (11:17)

By continuing China's MFN status, we strengthen one of the mechanisms which is so successfully introducing new ideas into China and undermining its communist regime. This is the “peaceful evolution” that worked so well in the Soviet Union and so worries Beijing. (13:22)

## VII

### REALISM VERSUS IDEALISM IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

“Do not do unto others as you would they should do unto you. Their tastes may not be the same.”

-- George Bernard Shaw

Despite all the turmoil which has evolved in the post cold-war era, and in stark contrast to the events in other parts of the world, Asia is basically stable, peaceful, and characterized by high economic growth rates. For the first time in several decades, no major strategic fault lines split the major powers in the region. (5:xvi) Realistically, the multi-polar world we now find ourselves in has by no means eliminated the rationale set out 50 years ago for productive U.S.-Sino relations--balance of power--it simply has made that rationale more complex. (5:xxiii)

During China's first struggle to modernize in the early twentieth century, U.S.-Sino policy came to be dominated by idealism. The ideological battle between communism and democracy overshadowed our enduring national interests in Asia, and we lost all prestige and influence over the region's largest communist nation. It took more than 20 years to overcome this idealism, for U.S.-Sino policy to once again put national interests before ideology. The result was a widening of the schism between the world's too major communist actors, an acceleration of our withdrawal from Vietnam, and improved trade relations with the expanding Asian markets. Now, perhaps more than ever, as China continues a new phase in her journey to modernization it is critical the United States be mindful of its true strategic interests in Asia and carefully choose the right tools to accomplish its international objectives. Pursuing diffuse idealistic goals through broad

sanctions which are difficult to enforce and even harder to assess, without the support of friends and allies, is a formula for failure that unnecessarily disadvantages American economic and geo-strategic interests. (5:xxv) The U.S. should continue to pursue policies which accelerate the liberalization of China through ever greater engagement. We should be encouraging direct contact between U.S. and Chinese citizens so that the bonds which are built are not between governments, but between people free of the political and ideological baggage which has tended to define communist/free market contacts in the past. The very process of economic growth and interdependence we could have destroyed by withdrawal of MFN raises the cost of uncontrolled conflict for all parties involved. Peace and prosperity are thereby served.

Finally, we must remember that allowing the realistic side of our national psyche to predominate our ideological side does not abrogate who we are or those principles for which we stand. As Hans Morgenthau said:

The choice is not between moral principles and the national interest, devoid of moral dignity, but between one set of moral principles divorced from political reality, and another set of moral principles derived from political reality. A foreign policy guided by moral abstractions, without consideration of the national interest, is bound to fail; for it accepts a standard of action alien to the nature of the action itself. That approach operates with a false concept of morality, developed by national societies but unsuited for the conditions of international societies. The appeal to moral principles in the international sphere has no concrete universal meaning. (21:33/34)

# **Highlights of House Resolution 2212**

## **A Bill to Restrict Renewal of Most Favored Nation Status for China**

Under the provisions of the bill, China would be required to:

- Provide an accounting of people who were detained, accused or sentenced as a result of political protest before, during and after the June 3, 1989 crackdown by the Chinese government
- Release people imprisoned because of their role in the protests

In addition, China would have to make “overall significant progress” in achieving the following objectives:

### **Human Rights**

- Preventing human rights abuses inside the country and Tibet
- Stopping the export of products made with prison labor and allowing U.S. officials and those from international humanitarian organizations to inspect prisons suspected of producing goods for export
- Ending religious persecution and releasing incarcerated religious leaders
- Lifting restrictions on the media and on broadcasts by Voice of America
- Ending harassment of Chinese citizens inside the United States, including returning and renewing passports confiscated as retribution for pro-democracy activities
- Ensuring access by international human rights monitoring groups to prisoners, trials and places of detention
- Ensuring freedom from torture and from inhumane prison conditions
- Lifting bans on peaceful assembly and demonstration imposed after June 3, 1989
- Fulfilling its promise to hold high-level discussions on human rights issues
- Adhering to the Joint Declaration on Hong Kong, which sets terms on transfer of the British colony to the People's Republic of China

### **Trade**

- Providing adequate protection for U.S. patents, copyrights and other intellectual property
- Ensuring U.S. exporters non-discriminatory access to Chinese markets, including lowering tariffs, removing non-tariff barriers and purchasing more U.S. goods and services
- Ending unreasonable and discriminatory unfair trade practices against the United States

### **Weapons Proliferation**

- Adhering to multi-lateral non-proliferation agreements, including the Missile Technology Control Regime, the standards set by the nuclear Suppliers Group and standards set by the Australia Group on chemical and biological weapons proliferation
- Giving clear and unequivocal assurances that it is not assisting and will not assist any non-nuclear state in acquiring nuclear weapons

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